

# TENEBRAE SERVICE

## THE SEVEN LAST WORDS OF JESUS



GOOD FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 2016, 5:30 P.M.  
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHAPEL



## A TENEBRAE SERVICE FOR GOOD FRIDAY

Tenebrae, a Latin word for “darkness” or “shadows,” is a service that moves from light into darkness, signifying the death of the Light of the World—Jesus—on Good Friday.

This worship incorporates the Seven Last Words of Jesus, and with each, the movement from light into darkness is conveyed, as one-by-one, the candles are extinguished.

**At the end of the service, please leave in silence.**

### WORDS OF WELCOME

### MUSICAL PRELUDE

#### CALL TO WORSHIP *(Isaiah 53:1-3)*

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

We gather here to worship God.

**We gather to remember how Jesus suffered and died for us  
and to thank God for his love and his mercy**

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of  
the LORD been revealed?

**He grew up before God like a tender shoot,  
and like a root out of dry ground.**

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing  
in his appearance that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows,  
and familiar with suffering.

**Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised,  
and we esteemed him not.**

### PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION



## THE SEVEN LAST WORDS OF JESUS

### THE FIRST WORD

Luke 23:33-34

**Narrator** When they came to the place called "The Skull",  
they nailed Jesus to the cross there, and the two  
criminals, one on his right and one on his left.  
Jesus said

**Reader 1** "Forgive them, Father!  
They do not know what they are doing."

**Reader 2** "They do not know what they are doing"  
They do not know? They ...who killed Jesus?  
Who is "they"?

**Reader 3** It is so easy to name others  
to blame others  
the Romans  
the crowd  
Pilate, Herod, Caiaphas  
they all played their part  
and conspired against Jesus  
or simply followed orders to maintain the peace  
to keep Jesus' kingdom from infringing on theirs.

**Reader 2** And yet where are we when Jesus' kingdom  
infringes on ours? on our peace and our order?  
on our prosperity and our security?

**Reader 3** Where are we when the victims of our peace cry for justice? When those disenfranchised by our order call for compassion? when the hungry and the lonely beg us to share our prosperity our security our power? Where are we when Christ is crucified among us?

**Reader 2** Surely he should have raged at the sinners who nailed him to the tree. Surely he should have raged at us for the evil we do, the evil we do both knowing and unknowing, Yet compassion is there in the first words that he Utters He intercedes for us before the Father.

**Reader 3** Compassion that called him into being in his mother's womb Compassion that compelled him to the cross Compassion that brings incredible, unbelievable grace Compassion that echoes through the centuries to all who participate in the killing of Christ:  
Compassion that cries out from the cross:

**Reader 1** "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing"

**Narrator** Lord Jesus - you gave your life for us. You suffered and died that we might be made whole.

Choir, singing softly:

***What Wondrous Love Is This, verse 1)***

*What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!*

*What wondrous love is this, O my soul!*

*What wondrous love is this*

*That caused the Lord of bliss*

*To bear the heavy cross for my soul, for my soul,*

*To bear the heavy cross for my soul!*

**THE SECOND WORD**

**Luke 23:39-43**

**Narrator** One of the criminals hanging there threw insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" The other one, however, rebuked him, saying: "Don't you fear God? Here we are all under the same sentence. Ours, however, is only right, for we are getting what we deserve for what we did; but he has done no wrong." And he said to Jesus, "Remember me, Jesus, when you come as King!" Jesus said to him,

**Reader 1** **"Today you will be in Paradise with me."**

**Reader 2** How much are we like the first thief?  
Full of anger - because we are not rescued from our sin? Full of hate - because we suffer because of the sins of others?

**Reader 3** How much do we want God to snap his fingers  
And make right what we have made wrong?  
What we have allowed others to make wrong?

**Reader 2**    How easy it is to cry "save us"  
                  and to rail against God  
                  when there is no magic cure  
                  no miraculous recovery  
                  no legions of angels  
                  to take away pain and bring wholeness.

**Reader 3**    How easy it is to scorn the Messiah,  
                  to mock the goodness of the world  
                  and condemn the light of the world  
                  because we are unwilling to face what we  
                  have done?

**Reader 2**    Yet there is goodness  
                  There is a cure for sin  
                  a cure that does not promise magical solutions  
                  but promises that the pain of sin is not the end,  
                  that when all this is over  
                  when the suffering is finished  
                  that the final word is not torture and defeat  
                  but life -- life springing out of the ashes  
                  life transformed and fulfilled in Paradise.

**Reader 3**    To the compassionate thief  
                  To the one who could still recognize the good in the  
                  world. To the one who tried to comfort and protect  
                  that good To the one who sought good – Comfort  
                  as given

**Reader 1**    "Today, you will be in paradise with me."

**Narrator** Lord Jesus - you gave your life for us.  
You suffered and died that we might be made whole.

Choir singing softly:

***Jesus Remember Me, 2x***

*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*

*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*

**THE THIRD WORD**

**John 19:25-27**

**Narrator** Standing close to Jesus' cross were his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing there; so he said,

**Reader 1** "Woman, here is your son." Here is your other."

**Narrator** And from that time the disciple took her to live in his home.

**Reader 2** Who can grasp the grief?  
the grief of Mary watching her son suffer?  
the grief of Mary watching him die?

**Reader 3** And who can grasp the grief of the son?  
The son who must see his mother mourn?



**Reader 2**    What gift can a man give his mother?  
What can he offer when he is gone?  
How can he help her?  
Hold her?  
Comfort her?  
Honor her?

**Reader 1**    **"Woman, here is your son"**

**Reader 3**    Here is one I love, to love you, and for you to love.  
One who knows me  
One who is my brother and who can speak of me.  
One Who can hold you,  
comfort you,  
and honor you;  
One who shares your grief

**Reader 1**    **"Here is your mother"**

**Reader 2**    Here is one I love, for you to love, and to love you.  
The one who taught me,  
the one who fed me,  
the one who wiped away my tears  
the one who hugged me,  
the one who grieves with you.

**Reader 2 & 3**    Women, behold your children; children,  
behold your mothers.

**Narrator** Lord Jesus - you gave your life for us.  
You suffered and died that we might be made whole.

Choir, singing softly:

***Were You There, vs. 1***

*Were you there when they crucified my Lord?  
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?  
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.  
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?*

**THE FOURTH WORD**

**Mark 15:33-34**

**Narrator** And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.  
And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice,

**Reader 1** "Elo-i, elo-i, lama sabach-thani?",  
"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

**Reader 2** Of all the agony of that tortuous day  
the lacerations of the scourging  
the chafing of the thorns around his head  
the convulsions of his tormented, dehydrated body  
as it hung in the heat all the day  
Nothing reaches the depth of this anguished cry of desolation

**Reader 1** "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

**Reader 3** Jesus, who found his purpose and strength in the presence of God who was sustained by the immediacy of his relationship with God and who endured all by the tangible power of God always at work within him, always a center of vitality and peace, found himself totally alone on the cross.

**Reader 2** Jesus, whose very being was God,  
found himself utterly,  
absolutely,  
despairingly.  
cut off from all that gives life and breath  
cut off from all that gives purpose and hope  
cut off from the source of his being  
cut off, even from himself  
plumbing the depths of the human condition  
to walk in the place of the utter absence of God,  
in the place of sinners  
in the place of those who reject God.

**Reader 1** "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

**Reader 3** In these words is the central mystery of the crucifixion which cannot be fully comprehended, that there is no despair so deep or evil so overwhelming or place so far removed from joy, light, and love from the very heart of God that God has not been before us, and where God cannot meet us and bring us home.

**Narrator** Lord Jesus - you gave your life for us.  
You suffered and died that we might be made whole.

Choir, singing softly:

***Were You There, vs. 2***

*Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?  
Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?  
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.  
Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?*

**THE FIFTH WORD**

**John 19:28**

**Narrator** After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished,  
said (to fulfil the scripture),

**Reader 1** "I thirst."

**Reader 2** There is a kind of timelessness about hanging on a cross. It is not a quiet death, over in an instant in one glorious moment of martyrdom like being torn apart by lions. A cross is as much an instrument of torture as it is a gallows from which to hang,

**Reader 3** And as the day wears on  
seconds stretch into minutes which stretch into hours until there comes a point when time can no longer be measured except in the gradual weakening of the body and its ever more insistent demands for that substance which is so vital to life so foundational to all living things so basic to

existence as we know it: -- water.

**Reader 2** Water to moisten a parched mouth—  
Water to free a swollen tongue  
Water to open a rasping throat that cannot gasp  
enough air. Water to keep hope alive to keep life  
alive just a few moments longer.

**Reader 3** Water, to a crucified man, is life.

**Reader 2** "O God, thou art my God, I seek thee,  
my soul thirsts for thee;  
my flesh faints for thee  
as in a dry and weary land where no water is."

**Reader 3** Who can tell if these words from Psalm 63 went  
through Jesus mind, but a thirst for water is a thirst  
for life  
and a thirst for life is a thirst for God  
who promises streams in the desert  
mighty rivers in the dry land  
and living water to wash away every tear.

**Reader 2** Here, at the end of it all those promises seem far  
away, --distant. And yet Jesus - forsaken by God  
still clings to the memory and the hope of life.

**Reader 1** "I thirst."

**Narrator** Lord Jesus - you gave your life for us.  
You suffered and died that we might be made  
whole.



Choir, singing softly:

***Were You There, vs. 3***

*Were you there when they pierced him in the side?  
Were you there when they pierced him in the side?  
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.  
Were you there when they pierced him in the side?*

**THE SIXTH WORD**

**John 19:29-30**

**Narrator** A bowl was there, full of cheap wine mixed with vinegar, so a sponge was soaked in it, put on stalk of hyssop and lifted up to his lips. When Jesus had received the wine, he said,

**Reader 1** "It is finished"

**Reader 2** What a sigh of relief!  
What a cry of deliverance,  
that finally,  
after seemingly endless pain  
and gasping torment,  
it is over at last.  
The suffering is ended.  
The ordeal is finished  
and nothing remains  
but the blessed peace of the absence of all  
sensation.

**Reader 3** When all there is, is pain  
its ceasing is the greatest blessing of all  
even when its ceasing comes only with death.

**Reader 2** But Jesus' cry is more than just welcoming the ending of pain it is more than joy at the deliverance death brings.

**Reader 3** He does not merely say, "it is over"  
he says, "it is accomplished,  
fulfilled,  
achieved"

**Reader 2** Jesus's cry isn't a cry of defeat and despair

**Reader 3** It is a cry of success and triumph  
- even at the moment of death -  
that the race has been run  
that he has endured to the end  
that the strife is over  
and the battle is won.

**Reader 2** Jesus' cry is a cry of relief to be sure  
but it is also a cry of victory:

"The work I came to do is complete"  
there is nothing more to add

**Reader 1** **"It is finished"**

**Narrator** Lord Jesus - you gave your life for us.  
You suffered and died that we might be made whole.

Choir, singing softly:

***Were You There, vs. 4***

*Were you there when they laid in the tomb?*

*Were you there when they laid in the tomb?*

*Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.*

*Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?*

**THE SEVENTH WORD**

**Luke 23:46**

**Narrator** Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said,

**Reader 1** “Abba, Father, into thy hands  
I commit my spirit!”

**Narrator** And having said this he breathed his last.

**Reader 2** It is the end, the very end  
the end of the ordeal  
the end of the suffering  
and Jesus  
alone on the cross  
tortured  
exhausted  
abandoned by his friends  
forsaken by God  
gasps for a last breath  
and gathers the strength for one final cry.

- Reader 3** Why would he choose to speak  
so close to the end?  
Why would he muster the last energy he had  
to cry out with a loud voice?  
Couldn't God have heard his thoughts?
- Reader 2** Unless God wasn't the only one intended to hear.  
Unless his voice was pitched loud  
so that we too might hear this final dedication of his  
soul.
- Reader 3** A dedication made despite the pain,  
despite the mocking,  
despite the agony,  
despite the sense of horrible aloneness he felt.
- Reader 2** A dedication made to God  
before the resurrection,  
before the victory of the kingdom,  
before any assurance other than that  
which faith could bring.
- Reader 3** Jesus entrusts his spirit -- his life --  
and all that has given it meaning --  
to God in faith,  
even at the point of his own abandonment  
when the good seems so very far away  
he proclaims his faith in God,  
the darkness cannot overcome it.

## Reader 1    "Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit"

**The service has ended. Please depart in silence and in peace, and may the Spirit of Christ, go before you, go behind you, be your foundation, and the light upon your path.**

### **Worship resources:**

Rev. Richard J. Fairchild, *Spirit Networks*, 1999-2006, [www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/a-gdfr-sn.php](http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/a-gdfr-sn.php), accessed 040114; Robert E. Webber, editor. *The Services of the Christian Year*. Volume 5 in *The Complete Library of Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: StarSong Publishing Group, 1994), 356-358; <http://raineypraysonsomedays.blogspot.com/2013/06/a-combined-tenebrae-and-seven-last.html>, accessed 040114; Theresa Coleman, <http://reverendmommy.blogspot.com/2005/03/tenebrae.html>, accessed 040114.